



C . S . S m i t h

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'Here the hedonistic principle is pushed to its utmost, the whole world has turned into a Riviera Hotel. But though Brave New World was a brilliant caricature of the present, it probably casts no light on the future. No society of that kind would last more than a couple of generations, because a ruling class that thought principally in terms of a "good time" would soon lose its vitality. A ruling class has got to have a strict morality, a quasi-religious belief in itself, a mystique.'

GEORGE ORWELL, July 1940

BRAVE NEW WORLD COLLAPSED

To my teacher and friend, Jacob Hooman Pejvack.

To the great writer and activist Nasreen Pejvack, author of the amazing *Amity*.

To my friends Wagner Pinheiro, Sungwoo Song, Misuzu Sahara, Andrés Marques and Mohamed
Abusneinah.

To Simon Page, Rachel Sayao and Bruno Nice; thank you guys!

1 – Sin and Death

Tempest.

A raging sea was dueling with the wrathful dark sky. Black waves lashed against a craggy cliff, while a grey blizzard struck the stone wall above it. A gloomy silhouette of a stronghold towered against the cloudy lightning-filled sky; an impressive fortress of stone. Indifferent to the fierceness of the wind or the roars of the sea and thunder, this massive construction had remained forever harboured on the headland of Cape Bougainville, witnessing the furious spectacle surrounding it.

Many years ago, the old building could have been a presidium or even a military post. Centuries ago. However, now it was the year 634 After Ford. The pinnacle of the Age of Stability. In this New World, war or crimes were no more. The fortress had needed to find a new function to be spared from dismantlement – as had been the fate of almost every other building of its time. And so it became no more than an enormous gravestone; a tomb not for men, but for the knowledge of yore. The broad reinforced concrete installations of the currently named “Falklands Refuge State Library Ranganathan” sheltered a wide collection of ancient books, most of them undisturbed for hundreds of years. Tomes of philosophy, history, literature, sciences and politics lined infinite shelves, in sepulchral cold galleries, squeezed between the stony walls. Plato, Moses, Hobbes, Einstein, Augustin, all were resting under layers of dust and oblivion. The final destination for an exiled wisdom.

Occasionally the dimly lit corridors were haunted by restless souls, uneasy explorers that dared venture through the narrow aisles to rummage among the yellowish pages; and in the midst of this maze of shelves was a rustic wooden door to a little chamber, in which one of those phantoms had chosen to dwell.

Lightning filled the chamber from a small square window with pale radiance. It seemed to be a cloister cell; a kerosene-surrogate lamp projected trembling ghostly shadows upon the walls of rock. Within these walls, the phantom was at his desk, absorbed by his pen with the devotion of a copyist monk.

The phantom was a powerfully built man, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, with dark curly hair and a thick beard, surrounded by dusty books, crumpled papers and a pile of writing sketches. A man who was becoming every day more hardened by the strange task he imposed upon himself, as if he was gradually becoming part of the stone around him.

It had not been always this way. This phantom had once lived a real life in a perfect world. He surpassed both physically and mentally the eugenic elite to which he belonged - the Alpha citizens of London, capital city of wealthy West Europe. In the old days he had been a famous writer and a very popular lecturer at London's College of Emotional Engineering, consistently surrounded by enthusiastic students and fiery lovers – with tenuous boundaries between the classrooms and the alcoves. However, that was not his homeland anymore. He was no longer a citizen of the World State. Now, his companions were the cold stones, the still air and the words of masters that had left centuries ago. Having no one else to teach nor an audience to lecture and deprived of the arms of a beauty, he was immersed in his new occupation, absorbed in his personal fight with words, scribbling and erasing in his quest for the clearest phraseology, the finest style. Professor Helmholtz Watson had become a craftsman of his thoughts, a man in search of himself through his art.

A knock on his door. "Helmholtz!" his name echoed through the halls behind it. "Helmholtz!"

"Marx", he snarled, without hiding his annoyance. Yes, within these walls there was also his friend Bernard Marx, another wandering spectre. Like him, Marx had been too much of an atypical person in a world of typical persons and had paid the price for such unwise conduct. Bernard - also an Alpha Plus citizen - was a brilliant man, smart enough to be the only person Helmholtz could really hold interesting talks with when they lived in London (without risking being bothered by the local authorities the following day). Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson shared their nonconformity with what they called 'inane, almost imposed happiness'; as well as their differences with the rest of that 'childishly joyful' society. However, they were very different even between themselves. Marx's privileged brain was offset by a physical constitution quite below the patterns of his caste. Being noticeably shorter and thinner than his peers, he had the distinctive features of an Alpha, however in a body similar to that of a Gamma. Worst of all, Bernard perceived himself as a defective part of that standardized society - even more than the people around him already did - and although he was an outstanding psychologist, he had never managed to deal with such insecurity. His odd behavior and intemperate reactions only served to hasten his alienation from society, culminating in his exile, along with Helmholtz.

"I'm busy now, Bernard."

The door wasn't locked, however Bernard (knowing his friend's mood), did not dare to open it. "Come and see what is happening in London right now!"

"I don't care about London anymore, Bernard", Helmholtz shouted at his door. "Please leave."

"Come on!" the door insisted. "You *must* see the news!"

"Oh, Ford!" Helmholtz cursed, and instantly raised his hand to his lips, in a self-censoring reflex. For some reason, everything that was related to the name he had just bellowed had a highly obscene connotation in this insular island State to which they had been banished. It was as offensive to the locals as were dirty words such as "mother" and "family" in Western Europe and neighboring areas. Scurrilous to the point of undermining human dignity; Marx and he had both been told by the authorities to watch their language. Helmholtz was embarrassed by his sudden rashness; however he hated being interrupted while writing (*thoughtcrafting*, he used to say) and Marx knew that!

Anyway, his pen seemed to be rather useless that day. Maybe he'd better give little Bernard some attention after all. Helmholtz looked up at the window. A pale light flashed on his dispirited face; even the storm outside was refusing to bring its usual inspiration. He finally dropped his beaten pen on a page filled with mere scratches and no actual useful writing, capitulating. "Fine, what's so important to see on television?"

"It's John!" Bernard said. "Meet me in the Audiovisual Room!"

Helmholtz heard his steps moving away. John, what? He got up on his feet. John *the Savage*? He rushed through his door and hurried to the hall.

In a village settled upon a mesa in the New Mexico desert area, an ancient sunburnt man wearing rustic leather trousers was working the clay, shaping a pot. Suddenly the old man paused his activity and looked at the clouds in the red afternoon sky. A lone tear rolled down his dry face. "I knew you shouldn't have left, boy," Mitsima mourned in his zuñi-like dialect. "I hope you'll finally find your peace".

Helmholtz arrived in the Audiovisual Room; A small crowd gathered at the large flat screen that flooded their senses with color, noise and light; Why were all these people there? Were they also interested in John? And there was Bernard among them. "I know that area," Watson spoke to him, pointing at the images of rolling landscapes - a hill, ruins of a lighthouse. "Me too," Bernard turned to him. "It is on the southwest flight route from London."

"Is John there?"

Bernard Marx nodded, looking at the television. "Look!" The screen showed a strong long-haired young man, half naked, his back marked with scratches and minor bleeding, striking the ground with a hoe. An odd-looking man, but still well known to them. "That is our friend, no doubt. Who hurt him like that?"

At that moment there was a cut-scene. This time the young man was nervously gesturing, threateningly, feathers and sticks scattered all around. "Why is he so angry?" someone whispered, while another man appeared on-screen, this one wearing mulberry-coloured garments and a strange metallic hat, carefully approaching the furious Savage holding something in his hands. "Who is that Beta? What does he want with him?"

"The Beta is a reporter; probably from Hourly Radio, judging by that transmitter on his head," inferred Helmholtz Watson. "That fool wants to interview John,"

"Which isn't a clever idea, is it?"

Háni! Sons éso tse-ná! Along with that likely scurrility, the Savage delivered his antagonist's coccyx a most prodigious kick. Crowds gathered around the large public TVs at many locations in London laughed out loud at the scene's comicality.

"Yes, the boy is still good for a fight!" Helmholtz commented.

"Good enough for that Beta," Bernard observed, watching the Savage chasing away the complaining intruder. "What's next?"

What was next surely would be formidable. The scene shifted to John bowing on his knees, his back exposed; the room was filled with sighs and shrieks of anticipation. "He'll start that again!" someone laughed.

"What are they...?" before Helmholtz finished the question a resounding '*Crack!*' answered him, followed by 'hoorays' from people around. Scarlet strings came down from the left side of the young Indian's back.

"Oh, this explains the wounds," Bernard observed amazed. A handful of chords came again, this time from the right side. *Crack!* "He is self-flagellating!" The room burst in laughs. It was impossible to keep a straight face before the absurdity of that scene. '*Crack!*' New red scratches on the left side. John's features contorted. A renewed wave of laughter. '*Crack!*' A boy laughed with the hysterical stridency that his pre-pubescent voice still allowed him. '*Crack!*' The Savage screamed, blood ran, irresistibly hilarious.

"*What madness is this?*" Helmholtz cried out enraged.

"It's a ritual of self-purification from his tribe," Bernard explained. "Something must have left John upset to the point he's trying to purge it by self-punishing. Possibly he is still disgusted by the 'sinfulness' of civilization."

"Maybe you're correct, my friend, but that's not what I'm talking about," Helmholtz protested. "Look around!" As the television displayed the Savage falling on his face, bloody and exhausted, a young woman gasped, breathless, tearing at the laughter. "They mock at the situation. I overheard someone here calling John 'The Surrey Savage'. They talk about him like he was a clown!"

"Calm down, Helmholtz," Bernard could see his friend about to slap the people around. "They do not know him, they do not understand what's going on."

"I will not admit such... "

"Oh, so you are also fans of the Surrey Savage!" Bernard and Helmholtz turned to a tall, old, elegantly dressed man with a bushy mustache approaching. "That kid has become a sensation everywhere, from London to here. You know this show is a rerun, right boys?" he asked, as the scene changed to the young Indian reading an old book; a thriller break.

"Mister Nietzsche! What do you mean by 'rerun'?" asked Bernard.

"Just like the Eternal Return."

"Like *what*?"

"I mean they are displaying it over and over to keep the audience."

"So," Helmholtz went between, "what is being shown here has already happened long ago?"

"Not everything. These scenes you just saw took place last week. However, something even crazier happened last night," Thomas Nietzsche responded, "that is why all these people have left their books and came here."

Someone amongst those people who had left their books hissed, demanding silence. "What are you talking about?" Helmholtz whispered.

"Look, the headline event is coming!" Nietzsche nodded his mustache toward the television. The light took the form of a chaotic moving mosaic, made up of several naked human bodies, snaking, striking, spreading throughout the hills.

"Oh, Ford!"

* * *

Sirens echoed everywhere. The streets were rowdy. People crowded at the large screens of public televisions in the squares and on the facades of the buildings. Dozens of helicopters hummed from one part of the city to another, nervously maneuvering to avoid mid-air collision whilst jostling for space between the skyscrapers in the cloudy sky of London. It was going to be a hectic day for the capital city of the West European Control.

The city's Central Hospital was in the midst of a great commotion that morning. Aircraft hovered over the top of the building, landing one after the other, disembarking injured people - mostly women, who were quickly supported by Gamma nurses; then immediately taking off, giving way to the next. Some unaware staff asked: 'What is happening here, was it a landslide or some other calamity?' 'No, natural disasters were never so biased.'

A young, very pretty but distressed brunette Beta in a mulberry-coloured dress was hurrying through the corridors, crowded with nurses guiding their patients. Dodging stretchers, wheelchairs carrying people covered in bandages and Gammas in their long green aprons, the Beta rushed to the service desk. "I'm looking for a woman called Crowne!" she blurted breathlessly. "In which room she was admitted to?"

"Calm down, lady," said the attendant who was certainly not having one of her best days. "First of all, what's your name?"

"Fanny Crowne," answered the Beta girl.

The bedroom door opened, and Fanny and the nurse quietly tiptoed in. Heavy breathing was heard. The lights came on smoothly, revealing a reclining bed in the center of the room. Resting upon it was a woman, covered by a blanket from chest to feet, wearing a neck brace. Her arms and her red, swollen face were partly hidden by thick bandages. A plastic mask on her nose and mouth was connected by a hose to a metal cylinder. An intermittent beep from the electrocardiogram indicated a slow but stable heartbeat. "Oh Ford, oh my Ford!" Fanny moaned. "She is so disfigured! I can barely recognize her!"

"She will recover in a matter of days," the nurse calmed her. "Fortunately she has no fractures, deep wounds or harm to internal organs; but she suffered many bruises and injuries that needed to be disinfected, and also had to receive some blood-surrogate. She was sedated by a soma-based gas earlier, but she is about to wake up. You can stay here to monitor the patient, but please do not let her become distressed."

The lights lowered as the nurse left Fanny alone with the girl on the bed.

"Have you heard? You'll be fine, dear", she whispered in the twilight.

The fact that they both shared the same surname was nothing more than a common coincidence. They were most likely products from different anonymous ovaries, and surely from unknown distinct sperm sources, and the merest suggestion of consanguinity between them would be regarded as outrageous; but they shared a strong bond of affection, true sisters in a world with no more siblings. "You'll be fine in time." Anguish filled Fanny's heart as she kindly untangled some strands of blond hair from the girl's face. Anguish, but also an inevitable revulsion - even a tenderhearted person like Fanny Crowne could not help feeling shocked at seeing those wounds. "Ford..." As any other citizen of the World State, Fanny had been conditioned since she was an embryo in a bottle to be extremely squeamish at even the idea of illness or injury, considering it gruesome and disgusting; as horrifying as old age, physical deformities or dirt. She covered her face with her hands, her eyes moistened. "What kind of brute would be able to put such a sweet person in such a deplorable state?"

Suddenly she heard a groan - the patient was moving on her bed. Fanny Crowne approached and gently pulled down the sedative mask. The girl coughed twice and slowly opened her swollen red eyes, revealing big bluish irises. She blinked, the irises turned to Fanny.

"Oh... Hullo darling." she whispered weakly, in an attempt to smile. Fanny held her hand.

"Welcome back, Lenina Crowne," she answered sweetly.

* * *

The door opened silently; light flooding in from behind a silhouette. "Oh, there you are!" whispered a male voice. He entered briskly and closed the door behind him.

"Henry! You took too long..." said Fanny.

"Ford Flivver," the man stepped into the bluish light of the ionized argon lamps. He had a youthful and handsome appearance, his blond hair impeccably combed, his body the frame of an Alpha. "It's a mess out there! I had to park the helicopter several blocks from here." His face creased up for a split second as he looked at the convalescent girl. "Oh! Is she awake?"

"She woke up a few minutes ago," replied Fanny, and patted the girl's arm. "Look, dear, Henry is here."

Lenina Crowne opened her eyes again and smiled faintly at him, muttering something. Fanny Crowne, Henry Foster, she was glad to have them there. They were more than her colleagues at the Central London Hatchery. They were her dearest friends.

"How do you feel, honey?"

"Believe me, better than I look," Lenina grunted. "Just an ache here and there; Ford, they completely bandaged me," she said, showing the wrappings on her arms. "They think I'm a weakling?" She looked at the television set. "Please turn it on. I want to see what's going on in the news."

"Honey, you need to rest," said Fanny. "You shouldn't upset yourself."

"Oh, come on!" she moaned with annoyance. "I have to know what happened to John."

Fanny frowned and looked at Henry. Yes, he confirmed with a gaze, she was referring to the Savage; the one who had put her in this wounded state.

* * *

Thousands of screens simultaneously showed an aerial view, hundreds of naked forms could be seen spread out on a greenish hill, intertwined in frantic movement, shrouded in a dense mist of Soma, lusty and brawling.

"Ford's *Tin Goose*!" Fanny widened her eyes and put her hands over her mouth, terrified. "Were both of you *there*?"

Watson passed his hand across his forehead. "*What are those crazy people doing?*"

"Look at how that girl is being lashed!" said some girl at Trafalgar Square's public Panel TV. "And nobody helps her."

"It is like a fabulous Fordian Service combined with the melee that you and John caused with the Deltas," Bernard scoffed.

"Fan-tas-tic!", Indira was enthusiastic, much to the amazement of her colleagues at M.L.O'Hern.

"Sodom and Gomorrah," someone whispered at the Controller's office in Buckingham.

"Oh, those Brits," Renata sniggered between gulps of beer at a pub in Stanley. "Jim, turn up the sound!"

"Seeing the whole picture, it is even scarier", said Henry.

"Very funny, Bernard," Helmholtz mumbled. "Where is John? Can you see him amidst that mess?"

"Bunch of morons!" Adam Wilde grunted at HR's bureau. "Whatever! I want one of you kids right there now!"

"I don't understand," Fanny blurted, "if *both of you* were also in the midst of this *debauchery*, how come only Lenina got hurt?" (whereas Henry had somehow kept that unnaturally impeccable hairdo?)

"Sacred Jalopy", George Locke sighed and turned to his peers at the gathering table. "I don't have a good feeling about this."

"I never saw anything like that back in my days in Britain," observed Thomas Nietzsche. "People had always been pretty crazy, but not *that* insane."

"These are still images from yesterday; it is enough." Henry stepped up to turn off the television.

"No!" Lenina Crowne demurred. "Listen, this whole turmoil doesn't interest me at all; but we know John was in the center of this mess and I'm waiting for more news about him."

* * *

"An outdoors orgy-porgy in honor of the Savage!" Voltaire Arouet, the TV host, laughed aloud. "What do you think?"

"As an artist, I welcome it," answered his guest Darwin Bonaparte, "but I don't think it is a good idea, at least not the way it's being done;" he gestured to a small screen where the scenes were being presented. "I believe that recreational activities like this should generate dividends, encourage trade. We have to create proper rules and exclusive product lines. Did you see the scourge they used to whip each other? We should create replicas duly authorized by our Federation of Sports. I also see potential growth for bandages and other curative industries, but everything must be done within our convention of *sanitation* and promote the common good as well as our morals." He raised his finger and smiled roguishly. "And the production of good feelies, of course."

"Good feelies! Can you believe this *opportunist*? Ha ha ha," shouted Voltaire Arouet to his audience, who cheered delightedly.

* * *

"I hope 'John' has been arrested and taken for Reconditioning!"

"He's a savage man, Fanny. Since he was not conditioned like us, he doesn't have a base point to revert to," Henry explained this with a didacticism that hinted 'you work in a Conditioning Centre, you should know this'.

"So let him be deported to a faraway savage island! It's what he deserves for doing..." She stopped, looking sadly at Lenina on the bed reclined almost to a right angle. To think that she, Fanny, had not long ago encouraged her friend to *have* John, rain or shine. Seeing her anxious blue eyes reflecting the glow of the television moved Fanny immensely. They remained silent for a while, listening to the newsreader.

"I don't understand," Lenina finally murmured, as if struggling to remember some lost detail as she watched a group of unclothed boys and girls attacking each other with quirts. "I really don't."

"Only our Freud can explain how all those people became so *erotically wild*," stated Henry.

"I'm thinking about John. What made him so angry, so brutal towards me..."

"I guess this is what happens when one doesn't take tablets", said Fanny. "Without Soma, people can only become unstable and violent."

That does not clarify even a bit what happened shortly thereafter, Henry thought to himself. From the moment the Savage - maddened by their intrusion into his little sanctuary at Elstead's old lighthouse - had pounced on Lenina and him with a scourge of cords, that ambiguous insanity had spread like wildfire throughout the crowd of onlookers around them. He glanced at the TV again; only our Freud...

"Is it really so?..." Lenina shook her head. "I can't avoid remembering what Bernard used to say..."

"Bernard? Are you talking about *Bernard Marx*? Ford's sake, you still think about..."

"Wait girls, look: there is some breaking news!"

* * *

Elstead Hill. A group of Gamma officials in their green costumes were carrying a long black plastic bag from outside the old lighthouse. Others were trying to make their way through the throng. A tall leader wearing gray, ordered the squad to put the bag inside a huge helicopter, the World State Shield symbol on its fuselage, which had just landed nearby; some Gamma Guards struggled to dispel the uproarious crowd which pressed against them.

"Captain, what's happening?" a civilian asked.

"I'm not allowed to disclose that information," thundered the leader. "Please wait for the official announcement."

"Where is the Savage?", came another voice.

"We are here for more Savage orgy!" others were joining in with shouting and questioning.

"What is inside that bag?"

"...he brought whips!"

"He made us one! He made us one!"

"Gentleman, again, please wait for the official announcement," the leader insisted.

"...porgy gives release!"

"I want to be possessed by him, too!"

"Where is he?" The cries were multiplying.

"What is that rope you're carrying?"

The Gamma tried awkwardly and ineffectively to hide the rope.

"Our Savage!" someone shouted.

"Our Savage!" other voices responded.

"Hey!" the leader turned, furious. "Who is saying that?"

* * *

The image remained on the screen for a few long seconds. Against the sunlight seeping through a high window, a suspended figure turned slowly from side to side, oscillating and tilting like the needle of a damaged compass of a traveler, adrift.

* * *

"My Lord, the images you're seeing are..."

"I know," a deep resonant voice interrupted the mulberry-liveried Beta Captain. A black-haired man with a hooked nose and dark piercing eyes was seated in a high-backed armchair behind a large desk. "Bring me the telephone," he gestured.

At his command two medium-height identical octoroons in their green uniforms – Gamma butlers - pushed a table on coasters towards him, a black box with a fancy silver hook upon it. The man in the high-backed seat took the hook and, calmly but severely, ordered the telephonist to call "Director Wesley." After some seconds, he uttered in a rather harsh tone, "It's me. Are you watching the news? Good. So you know why I am calling. Stop the transmission of images of our mission in Elstead immediately and above all remove every piece of footage shot inside the lighthouse. None of this should be transmitted. Find those responsible. I do not expect any less from you."

The man hung up the phone and, placing his elbows on the desk and entwining his fingers, focused on the large television set in front of him. The officers watched him reverently, somewhat bewildered by his sudden silence. After some seconds the broadcast was interrupted, and the image turned to noise.

"What's happened now?" Bernard asked thousands of miles away. "Is it offline?"

"Bernard! Was that what it seemed?" There was a certain dread in the voice of Helmholtz.

The image returned, replaying the scenes of that frightful orgy.

"Ah, I think I understand," sighed Thomas Nietzsche.

"Good," the man in the high back armchair waved his hand. "You can leave, now".

"As you wish, thy Fordship," the officers saluted. The Beta Captain left the office, followed by the twins in green, dragging the large television set. As soon as he found himself alone in the room, the man grabbed the phone again and pressed a button.

"Hullo. It's me. Yes. Yes, of course I saw it. Who do you think authorized that team? Yes, we will organize the 'collected data'. Yes, I understand. I have just taken action concerning

this. You know me. Yes, that leak will cost him his head.” He chuckled. “Of course I’m being metaphorical. Moreover, you were not supposed to know who Robespierre was! Never mention... what? Official announcement? Yes, I will think of something. No, not myself! Yes, possibly the nation is in shock right now, but they will soon find another pastime and forget everything completely. Oh, because I know how my people are, that’s why. Yes, you were right. Yes of course. I hope to see you soon. I have to go now; *World Controller’s* business to attend to. What? Do not say that. Of course, of course. Me too. *Au revoir.*”

He hung up the phone and murmured, shaking his head. “Sadly she is right. I should have predicted that this would happen, John. John... just like Cleopatra, you *desired* death as a lover’s pinch, didn’t you?”

He rose from his chair and straightened his jacket and tie, sighing. “Such a pity it ended this way, boy. I had imagined many scenarios for your integration into our world.” He walked to the door, turned off the office light and left. “But I had failed to foresee that it would end like this. The experiment is over.”

A low whisper sounded in the darkness, barely human. “No, Controller Mustapha Mond. Actually it is just beginning”.

* * *

“Of course I’m sure,” Henry sighed. “It’s what happens when one’s body is hung up by a noose around the throat.”

“I don’t understand!” Lenina Crowne growled. “Why would he do that to himself? It doesn’t make any sense!”

“You told me that in the Savage reservation they used to self-harm until their blood ran profusely in order to make the soil fertile. What sense do you expect from those people, dear?”

Lenina didn’t answer. She was pale, her eyes like glass, gradually becoming a tremulous glow; which did not go unnoticed by Fanny. “It’s fine, darling. He made his choice: to anticipate the inevitable; to become part of everything; and now his phosphorous will feed the trees, the trees will feed the birds, the birds will feed something else. He has finally found his place in the world, in the cycle of life.”

Lenina shook her head and yelled, “Fine? No, it is not fine! Death is not fine! Not death like *that*!” She sobbed; tears moistening the bandages on her face. She took Fanny’s

hands. "It's so absurd, I was talking to him just a few hours ago, and now you say he is gone..."

Henry and Fanny looked at each other. What was happening there? They were both aware of very rare cases when someone became very disturbed about another's death. Could their friend be one of those people with such a psychological disorder? And all for the sake of a berserk savage! Fanny shivered. Could it be a result of the beating she took? A hit to the head could...

"Dear, I should call the doctor."

Lenina took a breath and went on, "Oh Fanny, I know what you're thinking; don't get me wrong! I know that passing away is welcomed by those who have completed the lifetime predetermined from the hatcheries; a biological process like any other. However, strictly speaking it should only happen to people who have reached this stage, leaving this world happily on a soma holiday, surrounded by children and sweets; not a self-inflicted death, not abruptly, not... like that!"

Fanny remained sorrowfully quiet, holding her hands. What to say? She would usually reproach her friend for freaking out like this over such baloney, but the whole situation was too far from her beliefs and counsel. Lenina was too weak to deal with her inconsistencies at the moment, and - just maybe - she was not wrong about this death. It was indeed not supposed to happen.

"I was there," she continued, "I was with him. We went there to bring him back, I knew he couldn't cope being there, with all those people going to see him, making fun of him..."

"You did your best," Henry placed a hand on her shoulder. "You saw him, the poor man was as wild as a beast, beyond any help; Ford, I was lucky I managed to escape from his aggression, or I would have got beaten too!"

Fanny rose an eyebrow at him.

"Then the Soma Mist took over and the frenzy began..." Lenina went on, disregarding Henry's complacency, "he stopped attacking me and went on *striking himself* with the whip! I should have stayed there, I could have prevented him from..."

"Stayed there? With that lunatic?"

"Don't blame yourself," Henry insisted, "Most likely we will never truly understand his reasons, what afflicted him to the point of finishing his own life, but you have to deal with

what happened, my dear, the way we are conditioned to do so. Let him go, and keep your happiness."

Fanny looked at him, agreeing. Lenina closed her eyes. Tears were rolling down her face. Fanny patted her cheeks.

"Please, take a tablet, darling."

* * *

The TV news had already returned to local events, and the people that had crowded in the Ranganathan's Audiovisual Room to watch the show had already scattered back to the library, proffering exclamations of perplexity, wondering to what odd end the spectacle had arrived. Some even laughed at the event. "People from Utopia", they said. "There is always one more level to their madness!" Meanwhile, an anonymous former citizen from the 'Utopia' remained stunned in front of the screen, shaking his head. "Terrible," Bernard Marx shook his head. "Absolutely terrible."

"Bernie boy, do you happen to know the crazy guy that was on TV?" Seeing that Bernard was not in the mood, Nietzsche said in a more sober tone. "I know how you feel. I had to face the same realization long ago. Living beings are only a species of the dead. We were all conditioned not to think too seriously about these things. After all, what is there to think about? Yes, I understand why they bother with that masquerade in London, doing away with the terminally ill by increasingly large doses of hallucinogens in their Hospitals for Moribunds; why they make it seem pleasant to the children compelled to witness it, stuffing themselves with sweets and ice-cream. Well, we are not in London anymore, and it is up to each one of us to decide if the prospect of ending shall sweeten our lives with a fragrant drop of levity or an ill-tasting drop of poison. Because death is close, and there is no beauty in it.

Bernard looked up at him with a deep expression of sadness. "I should have known that those imbeciles would push him to his limit, but considering that he could..." he held back for a moment, shaking his head. "If at least *he* had granted John to come with us! Who knows why the Controller wanted to keep him there!" Thomas Nietzsche stared at them intently. Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson - what was up with these two fellows? What was their connection with the mysterious Savage who had appeared in the heart of Great Britain? And why would the Controller himself get involved in this matter?

As soon as he had been notified of the two Londoners arrival at Falklands' Refugee Community, Nietzsche had offered them jobs as his assistants at the Central Library. At least he could keep an eye on them. The exiled used to be problematic, especially Alphas.

Many of them went into depression; others, seeing themselves freed from the technological or artistic control of the World State, deepened their controversial scientific research or any other subject from which they had been prevented from studying before. In the end, the library had proven to be the right place to keep them mentally busy and out of trouble. Helmholtz Watson was immersed in literature and writing; Bernard Marx had become a fan of old books about history, religion and philosophy. 'We want to know the greatest thoughts of past humanity', they had said. Nietzsche promptly led them to Ranganathan's dungeons.

Nietzsche loved to tease them once in a while, mainly Bernard. 'Are you sure you are an Alpha?' he would say. Bernard's standard reactions to the pestering were just as amusing to him. 'Hush, you crazy, old man!' the boy ranted. He laughed aloud. They were useless, but didn't seem to be dangerous. What could they have done to be exiled from London? Why were they sent to his island? What was their relationship with the famous Savage, the celebrity of an unwitting slapstick comedy?

"I was the one who found him in a Savage Reservation," explained Bernard. "The World Controller granted me permission to take him to London. Without our tutelage, the 'modern world' would have become unbearable for him." After a pause, he continued, "I admit that I took advantage of him whilst it was possible. That kid aroused too much curiosity from the 'civilized' around him. Besides, being 'the discoverer' of the famous Savage put me in a prominent social position for some weeks. In the end, it was completely worthless. How I regret it!"

"It's interesting. You must tell me more about your misadventures when the time comes, but now I think you had better assist that brawny friend of yours."

"Watson?" Bernard looked around.

* * *

Bernard opened the door sheepishly, but its old hinges creaked noisily. He was as expected: sat at his desk, bent over a book.

"Helmholtz, you disappeared suddenly, is everything right?" he whispered. Watson did not answer nor turn to him. Bernard emboldened himself enough to enter the makeshift office and stood by his side. Watson's face was grim, barely discernible in the penumbra. "I see you're sad for what happened, my friend," Bernard said after a moment of silence. "I am also. Do you want to talk about it?"

"I can still hear," Helmholtz finally said in a grave, hoarse voice.

"What did you say?" Bernard stammered.

"I can still hear his voice in my mind when I read it."

"Read what?" But there was no answer as the seconds passed. "Well, I see you need some time with your thoughts. I'll leave you alone," said Bernard, turning back. Suddenly, the heavy hand of Helmholtz landed on his shoulder and spun him round. Bernard beheld with amazement the tear-soaked face and reddish eyes of his friend, frightfully staring back at him a few inches away. Watson pulled Bernard towards him, embracing him. The man was sobbing profusely.

"He is gone, Bernard! Our friend is gone!" His voice was numb.

"Hey, easy, partner. Calm down," said Bernard, troubled, feeling his friend's eyes wetting his shoulder. "It's all right!" As Helmholtz's breathing became decreasingly intense, Bernard allowed himself to chuckle. "Relax, big one. For a moment I thought you were about to beat me, you know?"

Helmholtz released him, wiping his eyes and cheeks, recomposing himself. "I'm sorry, Bernard. Perhaps I've overdone it, but it's the first time I have ever felt like that. I've never cried before!"

"So I see," Bernard said with some resignation. Then he added, "Look, I understand you, I am also sorrowful by what happened to the Sav... to John."

"Sorrowful," Helmholtz echoed. "So, this is the feeling. It is something to be cherished. On the other hand, I feel a strange joy," he said with a slight smile. "In the end, that fool has taught me a little about Shakespeare."

"Shakespeare?... what do you mean?"

"Everyone can master grief, but he that has it," he quoted. "To weep is to make less the depth of grief."

"Yes, I understand that only too well." Bernard breathed.

"I feel I've known a wider range of emotions, and that makes me more human than I was before." After a pause he said with resolve, "No; It is as if I was recovering something I had long forgotten! I wondered if grief was something that really hurts. Now I see that it does, but it's a different pain. Do you remember when I talked about the X-ray?"

"X-Ray?" Bernard's eyes widened. "I fear I missed something, dear friend."

"My desire was always to write something powerful enough to reach the hearts of anyone - as X-rays pass through everything; but I always faced the difficulty of finding something really worth it, in a world of so much propaganda, stimulus to the senses and nothing more;" he took a breath. There was a fresh sparkle in his eyes. "but now I feel I have got something. The power of a message that can talk deep inside us. Something that can pierce the reader!"

Bernard nodded, somewhat moved and embarrassed. Not too long ago, even he wasn't able to understand his friend Watson and was jealous about the sudden empathy between Helmholtz and John the Savage. To him, John had been nothing more than a resource of self-promotion since the beginning. Through that kid, he would prove to everyone that he was right, that his psychology thesis was accurate, that he understood better the entire human condition. That 'primal man' would demonstrate that society (and not him) was odd. How despicable were his ambitions! In the end, who cared about his preaching? And then there was that fateful occasion when John turned his back on him - refusing to submit to his guests, leaving Bernard in an extremely shameful situation - and it made him hate the Savage bitterly.

However, in the end he was right - John indeed wasn't like the others. He was better than them; better than him. The Savage had not truly despised him like everyone else, and his loyal friendship, his sincere devotion for a man that was thinking only of taking advantage of his condition, was the final proof that he, Bernard Marx, was right. The Indian was more a human than all of those so-called 'civilized' aristocrats who attended the meetings Marx organized in his apartment; and yet, he was unable to return such friendship. He, Bernard Marx, was no better than the fools who scorned him.

John used to talk about "souls". He looked at Helmholtz, who was now staring at the cloudy sky, so naively pure in his emotions, spontaneous as a child, tasting his 'new power' of feeling sadness; an unenviable gift. If something like a soul really existed, Helmholtz had a nobler one than him.

"You're a little wacky, Watson," he chuckled, "but a good man." He patted his friend's shoulder. "Come, take your umbrella. Let's go back to the hostel. Enough library for today." Watson turned to him, agreeing. On his desk, the book remained open, marked by his teardrops, each line underscored by his pain.

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

*Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will*

And makes us rather bear those ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.

A cold wind turned the pages.